

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AGRE-00 AID-05
CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DLOS-09
DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 EPA-04 SOE-02 DOE-15 FMC-02
TRSE-00 H-02 INR-10 INT-05 IO-14 JUSE-00 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-02 OMB-01 PA-02 PM-05 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-20 /165 W

-----115650 251749Z /64

R 251710Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6513
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIS, EEC, UK
SUBJECT: BACKGROUND TO THE HARD-LINE UK POSITION ON
FISHERIES

REF: LONDON 7550

SUMMARY. THE FISHERIES ISSUE CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR
STICKING POINT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UK AND THE
SEVEN CONTINENTAL EC MEMBERS AS REPORTED REFTEL. A
RECENTLY PUBLISHED PARLIAMENTARY REPORT DOCUMENTS THE
SITUATION OF THE UK FISHERIES INDUSTRY SINCE 1972 AND
HOLDS OUT LITTLE HOPE FOR FURTHER COMPROMISE BY THE UK.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE BRITISH POSITION TOWARDS A COMMON EC FISHERIES
POLICY REFLECTS THE SHARP DECLINE IN FISH STOCKS, FLEET
OVERCAPACITY, DENIAL OF ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL LONG-
DISTANCE FISHING GROUNDS, AND ACUTE COMPETITION IN EC
WATERS. THE FIFTH REPORT FROM THE EXPENDITURE COMMITTEE
(THE FISHING INDUSTRY) CONCLUDES: "WE AGREE WITH THE
VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS VIEW OF WITNESSES, THAT WHATEVER THE
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MERITS OR OTHERWISE OF UK MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY,
THE EFFECTS OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY HAVE SO FAR
BEEN BAD FOR THE UK FISHING INDUSTRY."

2. THE GENERAL EXTENSION OF NATIONAL EXCLUSIVE FISHERIES
ZONES TO 200 MILES, UNFORESEEN AS IT WAS, GREATLY ALTERED
THE ECONOMIC COMPLEXION OF EC MEMBERSHIP. IN 1970, WHEN

THE UK BEGAN NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE 1972 SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF ACCESSION, A COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CFP) HAD JUST COME INTO EXISTENCE WHICH THE UK HAD NO SAY IN CREATING AND WHICH DID NOT SERVE UK INTERESTS: REGULATIONS PROVIDED FOR A COMMON ORGANIZATION OF THE FISHERIES MARKET (COMMON PRICE AND TRADING SYSTEM), COMMON RULES ON COMPETITION AND COMMON STRUCTURAL POLICY WITH EQUAL TREATMENT FOR NATIONALS OF OTHER EC STATES.

3. UK FISHERMEN AND HMG MAINTAIN THAT THE UK ALONE AMONG EC MEMBERS HAS TAKEN POSITIVE ACTION TO CONFRONT THE PROBLEM OF DECLINING FISH STORES DUE TO OVER-FISHING, THAT THE BRITISH CONSERVATION EFFORT HAS BEEN GREETED WITH DELIBERATE OVER-FISHING (AND PARTICULARLY INDUSTRIAL FISHING) BY OTHER STATES IN A MASSIVE EFFORT TO CREATE A HISTORICAL BASE FOR A FUTURE SHARE IN ANY QUOTA SYSTEM THAT MAY BE INTRODUCED.

4. THE UK CONTRIBUTES ABOUT 60 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL RESOURCES OF FISH TO THE EC "POND." WITH ITS MAJOR FLEET OF DISTANT-WATER VESSELS, IT IS ALSO THE PRINCIPAL LOSER FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 200-MILE ZONES BY NON-EC STATES. UK FISHERMEN VIEW WITH SOME SKEPTICISM THE PURPORTED WILLINGNESS OF THEIR CONTINENTAL COUNTERPARTS TO APPLY CONSERVATION MEASURES AS RIGOROUS AS THOSE APPLIED IN THE UK. QUOTAS UNACCOMPANIED BY RESTRICTIONS ON UNCLASSIFIED

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VESSELS AND EQUIPMENT ARE DERIDED AS INEFFECTIVE.

5. THUS, THE UK HAS TAKEN A HARD-LINE POSITION IN THE EC COMMISSION, SEEKING (1) THE ALLOCATION OF A TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH IN PROPORTION TO ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE EC FISHERIES "POND"; (2) COMPENSATION FOR THE UK'S LOSSES OF DISTANCE WATER FISHERIES GROUNDS, AND (3) "DOMINANT PREFERENCE" FOR UK FISHERMEN WITHIN A 50-MILE COASTAL BELT. ADDITIONALLY, THE UK HAS PRESSED FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF NONDISCRIMINATORY CONSERVATION MEASURES.

6. BY JANUARY, 1978, THE EC COMMISSION HAD CONCEDED THAT LOSSES OF DISTANT WATER FISHERIES MIGHT BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN FIXING CATCH QUOTAS. QUOTAS MIGHT BE ENFORCED VIA "FISHING PLANS" SPECIFYING WHICH COUNTRY'S VESSELS MIGHT FISH IN DESIGNATED LOCATIONS, AT SPECIFIC TIMES AND FOR SPECIFIC SPECIES. THIS WAS GREETED AS A "BASIS FOR DISCUSSION" BY THE UK MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD, BUT PROGRESS SINCE JAN. HAS BEEN IMPERCEPTIBLE.

7. FISHERIES INDUSTRY SPOKESMEN HAVE STOOD SQUARELY BEHIND FISHERIES MINISTER SILKIN IN HIS FIRM STANCE, AND IN HMG'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO TAKE APPROPRIATE UNILATERAL

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SS-15 ICA-20 /165 W
-----115599 251748Z /64

R 251710Z MAY 78
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CONSERVATION MEASURES WHILE CONTINUING TO WORK FOR A SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT. THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS, NOTWITHSTANDING THE UK'S EC COMMITMENTS, OF A BILATERAL DEAL WITH NORWAY, AN APPROACH THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY TRADE AND INDUSTRY SUBCOMMITTEE FOUND TO MERIT EXAMINATION. THE SUBCOMMITTEE ALSO AFFIRMED THAT FISHERIES POLICY RAISED SUCH VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS AS TO JUSTIFY AN "OBDURATE DEFENSE," THAT THE UK SHOULD PROMOTE EXCLUSIVE 50-MILE FISHERIES ZONES FOR EACH EC MEMBER STATE WITHIN THE EC FISHERIES REGIME, THAT EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION SHOULD BE A KEY GOAL, AND THAT ENLARGEMENT OF THE EC SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO REDUCE FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXISTING MEMBERS.

8. COMMENT: A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT IS IN NO SENSE BINDING ON THE GOVERNMENT AND GENERALLY IS NOT COMPARABLE IN SIGNIFICANCE TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE REPORTS. HOWEVER, THIS REPORT, BY ADVOCATING A LINE ON EC FISHERIES MATTERS WHICH IS EVEN HARDER THAN THE ONE
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PURSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT, IS INDICATIVE OF THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HERE. ATTITUDES COULD, OF COURSE, CHANGE, IF THE EC WERE TO ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF FISHING PLANS CALLING FOR STRICT CONSERVATION AND WITH THE MAJOR SHARE OF QUOTAS GOING TO UK FISHERMEN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FISHERIES, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON08327
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780221-0531
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780520/aaaaaqkm.tel
Line Count: 180
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a0cbba96-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LONDON 7550
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2574671
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BACKGROUND TO THE HARD-LINE UK POSITION ON FISHERIES
TAGS: EFIS, UK, EEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a0cbba96-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014